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ABSTRACT

Bilingual education has had great impact on education in the United States. Bilingual education programs have existed since 1845. Between 1854-1877, eight states enacted laws stipulating that local school boards had the power to require English-German bilingual programs. Many bilingual education programs were created, thrived, and eventually died; some continued according to the political climate. The government directly addressed the issue in 1968 by passing the Bilingual Education Act, Title VII, which made provisions for the special needs of children with limited English-speaking abilities, who came from low socioeconomic environments where the dominant language was not English. As of 1978, 22 states have enacted mandates requiring bilingual education in their schools. Among the arguments of opponents of bilingual education are that bilingual education is an effort to teach young children in their native tongue; that English monolingualism and acculturation to mainstream United States society are sure indicators of being worthy, productive citizens; and that children entering public schools speaking a language other than English need constant exposure to English, with any other language delimiting progress. However, bilingual education has been shown to be an imperative component in teaching non-English speakers basic skills necessary to succeed in an English-speaking environment. (NQA)

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BILINGUAL EDUCATION: AN ANALYTICAL ASSESSMENT

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"I could write an entire book on this marvelous land of opportunity; it was here that my two children were born...bilingual education programs will not be well implemented until we lay to rest the erroneous ideas surrounding this program that are brought about by ignorance, prejudice and racism. I have even encountered some Hispanics that are ashamed of their Spanish language and labor under the false belief that knowledge of English is the sole mark of intelligence...Without forgetting that English is the official language of this great country, let us recognize that every language that we know enriches us."

This statement was representative of parental feelings brought out during hearings in San Antonio to elicit reaction to that city's bilingual education program. This proclamation was attributed to a woman who had been born in Mexico and had come to the United States as a young newlywed in the mid 50's. To support this woman's contention, empirical

research has proven time and again that the intelligence level of persons who speak more than one language will usually be higher than those who speak only one.

The crux of the problem, then, is to somehow overcome this ignorance, prejudice, and racism. Based on the fact that people who exhibit these characteristics are more often than not going to change their minds within their lifetime, let us look at bilingual education and why it exists; perhaps by gaining a better understanding of it ourselves, we may be able to convince someone as to why it is necessary now and must remain as long as we are a pluralistic society.

Bilingual education has had a great impact on the educational institution in the United St s. As controversial as it has been, its affect cannot be denied. Bilingual education is not a new thing in our society. As early as 1845, Cincinnati had a bilingual education program in its schools. The presence of large numbers of German immigrants dictated that the English-German bilingualism be a part of every day life. The uniqueness of the Cincinnati program was the fact that classes were conducted in German on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; in English

on Tuesdays and Thursdays. San Francisco had a trilingual program in 1865. Classes were taught in French, German, and English on a regular basis. These schools were referred to as the "Cosmopolitan Schools," because of their flair for the extraordinary. In the span between 1854-1877, there were eight states that enacted laws which stipulated that local school boards had the power to require the teaching of English-German as a bilingual program if enough of their constituents desired it.

Many other bilingual education programs in the early years of the United States were created, thrived, and eventually died; some continued according the the political climate/interests of the people involved. In the early southwest, informal bilingual schools and programs flourished because of political and geographical situations. As early Texans colonized the Mexican lands under the invitation of the Mexican government for the most part, they found a need for the knowledge of Spanish to conduct everyday affairs. In early New Mexico, Arizona, and California, all government transactions were conducted and recorded in Spanish. Thus the early inhabitants of these regions found that bilingualism was indeed a strong incentive and a worthwhile skill.

In 1923, some of the first litigation was introduced to the Supreme Court that involved bilingual education programs. Meyer vs. Nebraska, Bartels vs. Iowa, and Bohning vs. Ohio involved the right of parents to seek and acquire bilingual education (English-German in these cases) for their children. The mentioned states had forbidden any public or private school to instruct children in any language other than English, which are liberties protected by the due process clause, Fourteenth Amendment. Oklahoma, Arkansas, and West Virginia still have "English only" laws.

Brown vs. Board of Education in 1954 had an indirect impact on bilingual education in that it pointed out the fact that separate but equal education was unconstitutional. Education had to be provided for all equally regardless of racial membership. Another law which indirectly affected bilingual education was the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI. This mandate outlaws discrimination in federally funded programs. In bilingual education's formative years, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) used this law as an effective tool in seeing to it that school districts who showed need for bilingual education instituted and continued programs for their

children.

The government directly addressed the bilingual education issue in 1968 by passing the Bilingual Education Act, Title VII. This Act made provisions for the special needs of children who had limited English speaking abilities and came from low socio economic environments where the dominant language was not English. Its emphasis was developing competence in English while at the same time improving the native tongue of the child. This prescript stated that "the program was to incorporate the use of two languages, one of which was English, as mediums of instruction for the same pupil population in a well organized program which encompassed part of all of the curriculum and included the study of the history and culture associated with the students' mother tongue. A complete program was to be developed and maintained in order that the child have self-esteem and legitimate pride in both cultures."

Texas also addressed the issue by passing the Bilingual Education Act of 1975. This called for a "stairstep" approach to the institution of bilingual education within the state. Instruction in a bilingual setting was provided in certain areas of the State that showed need in the first grade that year, with

another level added each year thereafter.

The biggest impact on the present day bilingual education program in the United States was the result of Lau vs. Nichols in 1974. The issue presented was whether non-English speaking students (in this case, Chinese children in San Francisco) were receiving a reasonable, equal education, when the education was presented in a language they could not understand. This decision stated that "...there is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education." The absence of programs to meet this criteria was judged to be in violation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act.

Other litigation such as Cardona vs. Power, Serna vs. Portales Municipal Schools, ASPIRA vs. Board of Education, Rios vs. Read, Morales vs. Shannon, and Swann vs. Charlotte-Mechlenberg Board of Education have helped assure that equal educational opportunities are available to all regardless of language dominance or racial membership. As of 1978, twenty-two states have enacted state mandates requiring bilingual educa-

tion in their schools. The movement towards these programs has involved humanitarian rights being reaffirmed through the individual rights of retaining one's own language and culture.

Title VII of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 defines bilingual/bicultural education as

> "Instruction given in, and study of English and to the extent necessary to allow a child to progress effectively through the educational system, the native language of the children of limited English speaking ability, and such instruction is given with appreciation for the cultural heritage of such children, and, with respect to elementary school instruction, such instruction shall, to the extent necessary, be in all courses of subjects of study which will allow a child to progress effectively through the educational system."

In order to comply with Title VII, many bilingual programs became a reality in areas that showed need. Recent influx of Southeast Asians, Mexicans, Cubans, and South Americans has proven to reemphasize the

continued importance of bilingual education programs to meet the diverse needs of our population. Aside from social or political issues involving new immigrants, educators have taken the challenge in stride. Many outstanding and committed persons in the field of education have contributed greatly to the movement.

Bruce Gaarder (1967), an early proponent of bilingual education, has suggested rationale for the existence of bilingual education programs in the United States that applies today. He cites that the reasons for utilizing the mother tongue as a teaching medium are:

- to avoid or lessen scholastic retardation in children whose mother tongue is not the principal school language
- to strengthen the bonds between home and school
- to avoid the alienation from family and linguistic community that is commonly the price of rejection of one's mother tongue and of complete assimilation into the dominant linguistic group
- to develop strong literacy in the mother tongue in order to make it a strong asset in the adult's life

It is a strong contention that, regardless of limitations, children are important, and should be the first cause for concern. Whatever means are used to equally and successfully educate them, they must have that opportunity. Language cannot be a barrier.

Detractors of bilingual education are often heard to say that bilingual education is an effort to teach young children in their native tongue. Period. The fact is that this is done in order to facilitate the transition into learning another language, English in this instance. The last part is often left out, conveniently. This therefore makes their stance erroneous. Bilingual education's goal is and always has been to make the transition easier for the learner, not to necessarily limit the process to one language. An analysis of the word itself points to this fact- bi lingual.

Basically, bilingual education is a program put together to allow young children to ingest academic concepts and cognition in their native language, as they learn a second one.

Pupils who do not have English proficiency such as their English speaking peers may have, cannot learn basic concepts presented in English as well as their peers. By initially presenting lessons in a language

best understood by each individual child, an opportunity is presented so that all may achieve academically to the best of their ability. It is a fact that children in a bilingual education program start learning English as soon as the program begins. An integral part of a bilingual program is a strong English as a Second Language (ESL) component. This allows a student to express in English the academic concepts they have learned using their native language.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy summarized it all by stating that "children speaking little or no English should be made to feel immediately cared for. Young minds are squandered quickly-education must begin at once, and in the language the child understands best. In all of this, of course, the teaching of English must be stressed or the child will not be able to participate fully in his or her new environment."

Some extremists have been known to state that English monolingualism and acculturation to mainstream United States society are sure indicators of being worthy, productive citizens. Others phrase it in melting pot ideology by referring to the hordes of Europeans who migrated to what is now the United

States and became "Americanized" in one generation. These types of statements are usually terminated by the worn out phrases of "If we did it, why can't you people do it too?" or "Why don't you go back to where you came from."

First of all, we are where we came from! Anyone familiar with the basic history of the southwest knows that our ancestors had established a flourishing civilization in this part of the world while Europeans were still eating raw meat.

The Hispanic commitment to citizenship is in the annals of military history. Percentagewise, there were more Spanish surnamed soldiers awarded medals of honor during World War I than any other racial group. Ruben Salazar, a noted Chicano journalist, was killed during demonstrations in Los Angeles demanding an accounting of why so many Spanish surnamed soldiers were dying in Viet Nam.

As to why Hispanics, and in particular, Chicanos, are the largest "non-acculturated" minority group in the United States, the answer is obvious. All one has to do is to look at the geographical considerations related to the question: Europeans, upon arriving in the U.S., were immediately separated from their mother country by a tremendous body of water

known as the Atlantic Ocean. Mexican immigrants are/were separated by a non-existing border and a strip of muddy water known as the Rio Grande. Many were coming to a land that had originally been theirs, where the Spanish language and Mexican culture had been a way of life years before English was spoken in the United States itself. Cultural and language interchange with the country of origin is a daily affair for the Chicano along the border, this interchange is difficult when separated by hundreds of miles of ocean.

At the heart of the melting pot ideology is the belief that immigrants are in fact obligated to master the English language and American culture while forsaking one's original language and acculturation. Let us instead, look at a "salad bowl" concept. In this existence, we have a product that looks and tastes as one, yet there are separate, distinctive tasting parts that have an identity unto themselves-yet they come together as representative of one result.

Critics of bilingual education propose that children who enter the public schools speaking a language other than English are actually damaged because they need constant exposure to English, with

any other language delimiting progress. This is known in educational circles as total immersion. Research in the field has shown that total immersion works well in acquiring a second language-for adult learners. This is not the best method to use for teaching children. Highly motivated adults can be expected to devote long hours to learning a task. They can also be expected to bring a high level of self-motivation and sheer will power to the job of learning a language. Children, on the other hand, are different in several respects:

-Their attention span is much, much shorter. This has nothing to do with motivation or willpower, but is simply a characteristic of age. No matter how interesting the task, children can only concentrate and learn during short spans of time. If teachers were to spend long periods of time teaching only the structure of the target language, much of the school day would be wasted.

-Children have to learn many other things besides languages. If they are to keep up with their classmates on other subjects, they must devote parts of their school time to studying other subjects. Math, social studies, science,

etc., cannot be neglected.

The idea that children should be expected to learn English before they learn anything else, has been dealt with by the highest court in the land. In Lau vs. Nichols decision, the U.S. Supreme Court essentially outlawed this approach. In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court ruled that to require a prior knowledge of English "before a child can effectively participate in the educational program... is to make a mockery of public education." In other words, schools cannot expect students to learn English before they can learn other subjects; they must learn the English language and subject content at the same time. They also added that "there is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education."

Another often heard opinion, is that basically, bilingual education does not work. The following case studies refute that contention:

-Harlandale, Texas Public Schools: a five year bilingual education pilot project showed that, based on results of the Comprehensive Test of

Basic Skills (CTBS), mean grade equivalent scores of the bilingual group exceeded those of the total school population. Specifically, in math, reference skills, and science, the mean scores were far and beyond the district means. A non-bilingual group did not exceed either the school nor the total districts means.

-Santa Fe, New Mexico Public Schools: the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) was used to analyze school children's levels in grades 2 through 6. The two subject groups were divided into bilingual and non-bilingual. In the math component, third graders had surpassed the non-bilingual group's norm. By the termination of fourth grade, the bilingual group had exceeded the national norm. In English reading, the bilingual group was above the comparison group at all grade levels.

-Las Vegas, New Mexico Public Schools: A before bilingual education-post bilingual education study proved that those students who were exposed to bilingual education performed better on the CTBS than the ones who had not been in the bilingual education program.

-Artesia, New Mexico Public Schools: Using the

CTBS, Spanish dominant children in the bilingual program scored significantly higher than the non-bilingual children in grades 3 and 4.

-Lafayette Parish, Louisiana Public Schools: The students enrolled in the French-English bilingual program were tested using the Primary Abilities Test (PAT), the MAT, and a criterion test for French, and were compared to a non-bilingual group in grades K-3. Results showed that the bilingual group performed better than the control group in reading, reading readiness, linguistic structures, writing, math concepts, and social science.

-Dade County, Florida Public Schools: Using the Stanford Achievement Tests (SATs), researchers found that students enrolled in the bilingual education program showed the following characteristics: 1) in reading comprehension, they scored above the national average in grades 1-4; 2) in math, they scored above the national average in grades 1-6; 3) in math concept, they scored above the national norm in grades 1-6.

Bilingual education has shown to be an imperative component in teaching non-English speakers basic skills so necessary to succeed in an English speaking en-

vironment. As for the impact that Spanish speaking people will have on the United States, which further points to the continuing need for bilingual education programs, the following is offered:

-The 1980 census reports an estimated 16.5 million Hispanics in the country; a more realistic number is over 21 million.

-This segment of the population is increasing at a rate six times faster than the rest of the population. Between the last two census counts, Hispanics have increased by 61% while the general population increased just 11%.

-The United States is presently the fourth largest Spanish speaking country in the world. Only Mexico, Spain, and Argentina have more Spanish speakers.

-Los Angeles, California is the second largest Spanish speaking city in the world.

-The Chicago Tribune predicted in a series of articles on Hispanics that the Hispanic will be the largest minority in the United States by the year 2000.

-Time magazine predicted that the 1980's will be known as the decade of the Hispanic.

Another parent at the San Antonio hearings

summed up a lot of parent's feelings about the value of bilingual education:

> "I have seen many students who did not participate in class discussions because they were embarrassed to mispronounce words or in speaking with an accent and being laughed at or ridiculed by other students or teachers, so they remained silent and withdrawn. We must remember that language affects more than a student's grade; it affects his/her confidence and self respect. It is our obligation to fit the school to the child, not the child to the school. Otherwise we will continue to lose many good students due to their inability to speak English."

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